



Helpful Hints to Help You Sleep

Nearly all of us need more sleep than we get. One out of every three Americans had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep in the past year. The vast majority of adults need at least seven hours of sleep a night, and most need eight or more to function optimally. Drowsiness is an urgent warning, especially in situations where dozing, inattention or impaired performance could lead to catastrophe. The following tips have been found to work for many people who have trouble sleeping.

Your Personal Habits

- For several hours before bedtime, avoid alcohol, beverages with caffeine, chocolate, heavy, spicy or sugary foods, and smoking. They can affect your ability to fall asleep or to enjoy deep sleep.
- Exercise regularly, particularly in the afternoon, but not before bedtime.
- Restrict fluids right before bedtime.
- Try to establish a schedule where you go to sleep and get up at the same times every day, even on weekends. Don't nap. This will help to put your body into a good "sleep-wake" rhythm.
- Try adopting bedtime rituals such as taking a hot bath, drinking a cup of herb tea, or doing some light reading. Relaxation techniques before retiring may relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension.

Your Sleeping Environment

- Reserve your bed for sleep. Do not use your bed for watching TV, reading or eating.
- When you get into bed, turn off the lights, get into your favorite sleeping position, and expect to fall asleep.
- Bedding that is uncomfortable can prevent good sleep. Pamper yourself with comfortable sheets and a good mattress. You may need a queen-size or king-size bed if your partner has restless sleeping habits.
- If your bedroom is too hot or too cold, it can keep you awake. Find a comfortable temperature setting for sleeping, and keep the room well ventilated.
- Eliminate as much light as possible.
- Block out all distracting noise. For more quiet, try foam earplugs, or run a fan at night to drown out disturbing sounds.

Other Factors

- Several physical reasons are known to upset sleep, such as arthritis, heartburn, menstruation, headache, and hot flashes. Sleeping difficulties also are associated with psychological factors such as depression, stress, and concern or worry about problems. If you're awake from fret or stress after 10 or 15 minutes go to another room and read or watch television until you feel sleepy.
- Many medications can cause sleeplessness as a side effect. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about this possibility.
- Keep a "to do" pad near the bed and jot down all the concerns that might keep you awake. Then let go of them until morning.
- Consider taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement. Deficiencies in the B-vitamins, calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, and zinc can all contribute to sleep problems.
- Stop making excuses. Think about what you gain from your insomnia. Some people use it as an excuse for poor productivity or a chance to be the object of sympathy. Ask yourself what might change if you slept better. Work to resolve those issues and you just might start sleeping better.

More Information or Help

- The National Sleep Foundation - 122 S. Robertson Blvd, Suite 201, Los Angeles CA 90048
- Counseling Center - 346-3227
- University Health Center Physicians and Nurse Practitioners - 346-2770